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ABSTRACT

This monograph is one of 12 that address various topics in the area of CETA/education linkages. They were designed to provide those individuals interested in the development and implementation of CETA/education linkages with information that will serve to enhance the quality of existing programs and facilitate the efficient and effective development of new programs. This monograph reviews some of the characteristics of local education agencies (LEAs) to identify possible constraints associated with developing CETA/education linkages. Also, several suggestions are provided to show how local education programs can be adapted to include CETA clients. These include tips on initial planning, program offering and design, scheduling, program flexibility, instructional strategies, open-entry/open-exit programs, placement services, academic credit for work experience, and instructor inservice activities. (CT)

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ADAPTING LOCAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS To CETA CLIENTS

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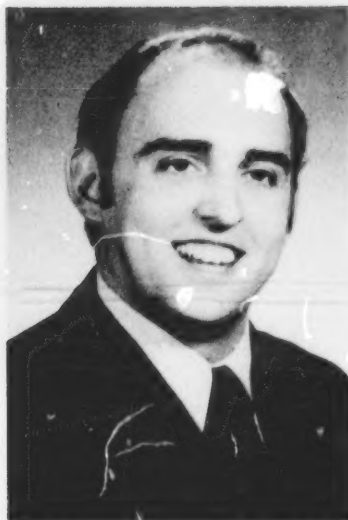
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Forward

Since the enactment of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), 1973, there has been a continued need to develop cooperative relationships between (1) local prime sponsors, (2) public and private educational institutions, and (3) community based organizations. While this concern seems to exist for a variety of reasons, it is commonly recognized that poor communication is a major barrier to effective cooperative relationships in Employment and Training (CETA). This problem continues because little information has been disseminated providing ideas or models for the collaboration of efforts in the Employment and Training field. The provisions of both CETA and the Vocational Education Act of 1976 have noted this problem.

Recently, the Virginia Governor's Employment and Training Council funded a three-phase project titled: "Inservice, Technical Assistance, and Information Dissemination Service for CETA/Education Linkages." One phase of this project provided for the development and dissemination of twelve monographs. The monograph series addresses various topics in the area of CETA/Education Linkages. The purpose of the monographs is to provide those individuals interested in the development and implementation of CETA/Education Linkages with information that will serve to enhance the quality of existing programs and facilitate the efficient and effective development of new programs.



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Upon completion of his graduate degree he accepted a position at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University as Project Director for the Vocational Technical Education Consortium of States (V-TECS) for the Commonwealth of Virginia. As project director he was involved in the development of catalogs of Performance Objectives, Criterion-Referenced Measures, and Performance Guides for various trade areas.

He has authored numerous articles and monographs in the areas of competency-based education and instructional techniques. Additionally, he has conducted various workshops for vocational and CETA educators and has served as a private consultant. As a faculty member in the Division of Vocational-Technical Education at Virginia Tech, he currently teaches graduate and undergraduate classes and conducts research in the area of CETA/Education Linkages.

ADAPTING LOCAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS TO CETA CLIENTS

I. Introduction

There currently exist two different delivery methods to provide occupational skill training. One method is vocational education. The second method is CETA. Identified through the existence of area vocational schools, vocational education programs are stereotyped by both laymen and professionals as a type of occupational education that provides in-school youths, at no direct cost, with the entry level skill needed for employment. CETA programs are supported by federal dollars and made available through the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act. CETA offers occupational education programs designed for the disadvantaged adult and out-of-school youth. CETA "client" training occurs in any number of environments and locations. Consequently, CETA agencies can contract with any number of institutions--public, private, profit-making--to provide clients with occupational education. Unlike the in-school youth enrolled in secondary vocational education programs, the CETA clients possess unique characteristics which mandate that some form of stipend be received for training. As with public vocational education, there is no direct cost to the client.

Occupational education policy makers at the national level have long recognized the existence of these two delivery methods. Dual delivery methods in other countries have served to document the potential danger that exists when each tries to maintain autonomy and resist the other. As a result of these past experiences, the emphasis of recent CETA and Vocational Education legislation has mandated that programs be developed to promote and create viable CETA/Education linkages. One way to create a CETA/Education linkage is to utilize the existing facilities and faculty of the vocational education delivery system to provide the much needed services to CETA sponsors and their clients.

While each system has built-in constraints that may make linkages difficult, they are not impossible. Let's first review some of the characteristics associated with Local Education Agencies (LEA's) to identify possible constraints associated with developing CETA/Education Linkages. After reviewing these constraints, several suggestions will be provided to show how local education programs can be adapted to include CETA clients.

II. Local Education Programs

Local education programs of occupational education have two classifications. These classifications are largely determined by the level at which the occupational training occurs. For purposes of our discussion, local education programs will include those occupational educations offered at both the secondary level and post-secondary level, or community college.

Secondary Occupational Education Programs

Of the two different local education programs offering occupational education, secondary vocational education is the oldest and perhaps the most common. As a result of the Vocational Education Act of 1963, it is difficult, if not impossible, to find a secondary school student who does not have access to some program providing the skills and knowledge needed for employment upon graduation. These occupational education programs exist not only in area vocational schools but also in comprehensive high schools.

Program Characteristics: By nature, LEA programs of occupational education are designed around the specific labor market needs of a particular community. This approach is consistent with the philosophy and purpose of the Local Education Agency. Chartered by the State Department of Education

and accountable to the community at large, LEA's view their primary responsibility as educating the youth of the community. Programs are supported partially through community tax dollars and are made available to all school age youth . The diversity of individual needs among the members of the community mandates that a variety of programs be made available. These programs exist in the form of varied curricula and can account for occupational preparation in the areas of agriculture, business/clerical, college preparatory, and vocational. The size, diversity, and employment potential of each community influences greatly the types and depths of curricula offered by an LEA.

Program Strengths: Several characteristics of the LEA set it apart from other forms of public education among which is the fact that the LEA is held accountable by the community. First, since the community supports only one agency for the purpose of educating youth, LEA's receive immediate recognition and status not normally experienced where competition exists. Second, since "free education" and mandatory school attendance are part of our culture, LEA's and school facilities have the benefit of "experience through existence." This existence has not only given them credibility throughout the community but also has provided the continuity essential for operating "on-going programs." Third, facilities, teachers and equipment are already available, thus reducing the expense associated with opening new programs. Additionally, inasmuch as an established low cost delivery system currently exists within every community, the "lag time" associated with program start-up has been reduced considerably.

Post Secondary Occupational Education Programs

A second type of program provided by local education agencies is offered at the post-secondary level. Although not

as old as the secondary programs, post-secondary education programs have experienced considerable growth throughout the United States in the form of community colleges. This growth is partially the result of an increased demand for technicians in the American labor market; the public's general willingness to receive additional training and skills not available at the secondary level; and the community college's willingness to provide programs in demand by potential students.

Program Characteristics: The philosophy and purpose of post-secondary education is unique to the American education scene. The "open-door admissions" procedure literally makes community college programs available to any individual within the immediate community and surrounding area. Depending on the type of program, high school graduation may not be essential for admission. Because of various funding formulas, cost to the student is low when compared to colleges, universities, proprietary schools, or technical institutes. Program offerings are flexible and in many instances courses are offered in evenings or during the weekend, thus permitting the student the opportunity for both full-time employment and education.

Program Strengths: The unique characteristics associated with post-secondary education programs have also provided specific strengths not easily matched by other institutions. First, the technical emphasis associated with various community colleges programs allows students the opportunity to take courses more specifically in line with their interests. Second, many community colleges offer intensive programs that provide the student with the necessary skills in either one or two years. As a result, students are able to not only learn a skill but also gain employment in a relatively short period of time. Third, the word "college" in the community college name adds considerable respect and prestige not associated with the "trade school"

name. To the status conscious American, community college graduates seemingly have an edge for employment over the high school graduate. Fourth, and closely related to this "status concept", community colleges are able to offer degrees to their graduates. While "paper credentials" can be a poor indicator of a person's worth, research indicates that a community college graduate has doors opened that otherwise may have remained closed. Whether these degrees are seen as a reflection of a person's intelligence (false!), or as a measure of his initiative (weak!), many employers prefer hiring a degree holder.

III. The CETA Client

CETA programs are designed specifically for the economically and socially disadvantaged individual who, as a result of having no occupational skills, is either unemployed, underemployed, or has difficulty in obtaining and maintaining productive employment. In many instances the total effect of these characteristics is so great that entry into, and successful completion of, traditional occupational education programs are difficult at best. To understand the severity of these problems and how they can prevent successful program completion, let's identify some of the specific problems characterizing CETA clients.

Client Characteristics: Typically, CETA clients are out-of-school youths who have failed in traditional education systems. These clients perceived the established education system as meeting few, if any, of their immediate needs. It should be remembered that economic reasons are seldom, if ever, the sole reason for dropping out of school.

A second characteristic of the CETA client is that the client is usually the product of a low income family. The low income status has prevented the CETA client from seeking occupational training from sources outside the public education spectrum. Additionally, the client probably entered the labor market in a low skilled, low paying, high turnover occupation. This pattern may be so prevalent that in many cases, the client has had numerous failure experiences in the world of work.

Third, and closely related to the low income characteristic, the client may either be married or have dependents to support, thus making immediate employment, and not necessarily productive employment, essential. Regardless of the nature of their financial obligations, skill training is sacrificed at the expense of a steady income, however meager it may be.

Fourth, for those CETA clients not fortunate enough to have current employment, short intensive skill training with immediate placement is extremely appealing. This is especially true for the out-of-work person having a family to support and/or other financial obligations. Because of this need, the CETA client is receptive only to intensive programs providing skill training with little or no emphasis on elective courses that have little direct relationship to the skill being pursued.

Finally, due either to their limited experience in public education or to limited successes within public schools, CETA clients are in need of remedial courses to increase basic skills essential for skill training success and employment. Deficient skills in reading, writing, communication, and basic mathematics may prevent success in even the most basic occupational training. Additionally, CETA clients may have either physical or health related deficiencies that also prevent them from experiencing occupational success.

IV. Adapting Programs To CETA Clients

Traditional LEA programs at both the secondary and post-secondary level have established a successful track record in the area of occupational training. Unfortunately, these programs were designed for the traditional, in-school student. For these programs to be equally successful with CETA clients, some program modifications are necessary. In this section several types of program changes that must be made if LEA's are to become a partner in creating viable CETA/Education Linkages will be reviewed.

Initial Planning

Initial planning is necessary for developing any occupational education program. There are some major differences in the planning process for programs involving in-school youth and those involving CETA clients. To be successful at the initial stage these differences must be taken into consideration. Pressley and McGraw (1978) identified six points that should initially be considered in developing programs for CETA clients.

- (1) Do not assume that the immediate needs of area employers and CETA clients are identical.
- (2) Cultural backgrounds of CETA clients may be different from the backgrounds of individuals traditionally enrolling in the occupational education program.
- (3) To be effective not only in training but placement, course planning must include business and industry representatives.
- (4) The qualifications of the instructors should not be based upon academic credentials but rather upon adequate trade skill and knowledge and the ability to relate to individuals with diverse backgrounds.
- (5) Programs should be designed to incorporate the open-entry/open-exit technique to provide increased flexibility.

(6) Each curriculum should be client-centered and not group centered to allow for the maximum consideration of individual strengths and weaknesses.

With these six tips serving as the basis for program adaptation, specific ideas that program designers might want to consider include program offerings and design, scheduling, program flexibility, instructional strategies, open-entry/open-exit, placement service, academic credit for work experience, and instructor in-service activities.

Program Offerings and Design: It would be logical for LEA's desiring to make their programs available to CETA clients to use existing programs. Instructors have been hired, laboratories have been equipped, and valuable instructional experience has been gained. In spite of this advantage, adapting existing LEA programs involves more than placing CETA clients into available slots. The unique characteristics of the CETA client mandate that certain modifications be made. One modification may be to make the total school offerings available to the CETA client. Restricting enrollment to only certain programs within the total school offerings serves as a negative screening process. This is especially true if only those programs having low enrollments are made available to the CETA client, assuming the CETA client only has an interest in those programs made available. For example, it would be useless to make welding skill training available to an individual who wants to become a machinist.

Yet another disadvantage associated with this practice is the threat of creating a caste system between in-school youth and CETA clients. The CETA clients would soon realize that in-school youth have a selection among twenty offerings, while they are restricted to only a few.

The specific design of the program is equally important. It is expected that in-school youth will take their skill training in addition to the academic and general education subjects needed for high school graduation. This practice is part of the tradition associated with secondary vocational education. It must be remembered, however, that the primary concern of CETA clients is not necessarily to receive skill training and a high school diploma, but rather to acquire a skill and unsubsidized employment. Logically, the sooner this occurs, the better. With this orientation, programs of occupational education for CETA clients should be short-term and direct. Content taught that cannot be directly related to attaining essential trade skills should be dropped. It is also advisable for appropriate LEA officials to work with their planning councils and related advisory groups to become active planners in their region's labor market needs (Department of HEW, 1978).

A final component of the skill training provided to CETA clients should be pre-employment skills. These skills should include not only the basics of how to get a job but also should emphasize such personal skills as the importance of good grooming, strong work habits, honesty, reliability, and working well with others. As in-school youth enrolled in occupational education programs are in many cases required to participate in these activities, developing a new component for this training is not usually necessary.

Scheduling: All too often, the scheduling of classes at the secondary level is based upon the needs of in-school youth. Unfortunately, unless the needs of CETA clients are also taken into consideration when scheduling, the efforts of LEA officials to provide CETA clients with occupational training will fail.

A criticism of many secondary schools is that their facilities are only used between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Once the in-school youths have completed their day, the facilities are locked. Community colleges have long recognized the potential of "unused facilities" and have developed extensive evening classes. These popular evening programs lead the student to the same degree as the day programs; and evening students can maintain employment while earning a degree with no loss of income. While the popularity and acceptance of these community college programs have resulted in their growth, unfortunately, there remain areas of the country not having community colleges within a reasonable driving distance. This severely limits the number of people who can take advantage of these programs. Ironically, secondary schools have an even greater potential than the community colleges to offer such evening programs since they are more easily accessible to a larger segment of the population. While it may not be uncommon to find people not having access to a community college, it would be almost impossible to find a community not having access to a high school!

The ground work for this type of operation probably already exists as many secondary vocational schools currently offer "adult evening classes" in a variety of trade areas. The transition from "hobby classes" to "occupational classes" could easily be accomplished by changing the content of these classes from "superficial" to "in-depth" and by increasing the amount of class time. Schools would thus make better utilization of their facilities while providing existing instructors, or substitutes, with additional income.

It should be noted, however, that the evening class approach may have a distinct disadvantage, even though the community colleges have experienced considerable success in this area. The primary reason for conducting occupational education during the evening was to allow students to work during the day! However for the unemployed CETA client, attending evening classes may not be

appealing especially if the daytime is filled with unscheduled activities that could detract from the success of their evening studies. Additionally, there may remain the idea that "night school" is either only remedial in nature or of a lower quality than "daytime school."

Thus, where appropriate, CETA clients should be permitted to attend school during the normal working day. This may mean scheduling classes with a mix of in-school youth and CETA clients, or the adding of additional sections comprised entirely of CETA clients. In either case, the CETA client should be given the option of selecting either a day or night time training program. Forced placement into either one must be avoided.

Program Flexibility: Program flexibility is another extremely important component to be considered in adapting LEA programs to the CETA client, especially, flexibility concerning specific course content. At the secondary level, many occupational programs are designed from an approved curriculum guide. The advantage of such programs is that they enable establishment of a standardized quality curriculum statewide. Additionally, curriculum guides are an important aid to new teachers. The reality, however, of the "guide approach" is that it may detract from its intended purpose especially as the guides become dated; may fail to account for changes within the occupation as a result of technology; and may be used improperly.

Another major flaw in the "approved guide" approach is that different types of clientele will be receiving the instruction. When providing skill training to CETA clients, it must be remembered that these guides are designed to be used for in-school youth, and the characteristics and needs of the CETA clients are very different. Additionally, the amount of time available to learn the skills is considerably reduced. Activities provided to in-school youth beyond those required for employment should be omitted for CETA clients. This concept also applies to the repetition of basic activities in an effort to increase proficiency.

While it would be disastrous to argue against CETA clients gaining proficiency, it is the degree of proficiency that draws criticism.

Once the client has demonstrated proficiency in performing a particular task, the client should be released from the program. Any degree of proficiency above that needed for employment can be obtained on the job while being paid! Working closely with representatives from industry, program personnel identify the level of proficiency needed for entry level employment. Remember, skill proficiency must be relevant to local jobs and must be followed by placement (Manqus, 1978).

Instructional Strategies: As with any other group of students, instructional strategies are extremely important when providing occupational education to CETA clients. Whether the clients are enrolled in programs at the secondary or post-secondary level, CETA clients' unique characteristics mandate that non-traditional methods be used. In selecting the appropriate strategies, a general rule of thumb to follow is that the clients determine the type and not the content. Specifically, instructional strategies should be used for the CETA client that incorporate short, concise learning experiences. If instruction is developed using small integral components, CETA clients can demonstrate the ability to learn and successfully complete sophisticated skills. By following this principle, many CETA instructors have introduced performance modules to their clients and have experienced considerable success. The extensive use of carefully selected teaching or instructional supplements can be helpful for those clients having reading deficiencies. These supplements could include the use of films, filmstrips, film loops, slides, transparencies, and wall charts. Additionally, the use of such instructional supplements may help the client understand essential occupational concepts.

Traditionally, teaching has been considered to be telling and class sessions have been primarily characterized by lectures. Unfortunately, this assumes that:

(1) The teacher is telling the students something they need to know;

(2) The students understand what the teacher is saying;

(3) The students like to listen; and

(4) The attention span of the listener is long enough so that the teacher can say everything that is important.

Past experience and research have shown that many, if not all, of these assumptions are false. A more appropriate strategy is Competency Based Education (CBE) in which the instructor directs the clients to progress at their own rates. The clients can pace their progress by spending an appropriate amount of time on weaknesses and spending less time on strengths. It also permits the instructor to spend time assisting clients needing the most help. Unfortunately, many instructors are not familiar with this approach and consequently fail to use it. The fact remains that the unique characteristics of the CETA client make CBE an ideal instructional approach.

Open-entry/Open-exit: Since the primary concern of CETA clients and program sponsors is immediate, unsubsidized employment, open-entry/open-exit programs are extremely desirable. The advantages of this approach are directed toward both the program and the client.

(1) Programs become flexible since clients can enter and exit at any given time.

(2) Projected program enrollments do not interfere with unexpected program growth.

(3) Programs are better able to respond to immediate employment needs.

(4) Clients are available for employment at staggered rather than scheduled intervals.

(5) Labor market needs are not flooded at a selected time during the year.

(6) Clients have an immediate desire for employment and are permitted to use motivation to complete programs faster.

An important point to note about the open-entry/open-exit approach is that it does not infer that programs be "watered down." While it may be difficult for a client to understand the need for remaining in a training program at the expense of turning down a job offered, it is the instructor's role to "counsel" the client in making the proper decision. Positive terminations can be increased at this stage if the instructor can identify for the clients deficient skills that would prevent successful employment. Nothing is gained by the client dropping out of a program to take a job which he does not have the skills to perform.

Placement Services: A strong, effective placement service is an essential component to the planning of any LEA adopting its program to CETA clients. The importance of the placement component cannot be over emphasized since it serves as the key to any successful program. While many educators assume that skill training is the key to occupational success, studies by Lusteran (1973) have shown that obtaining appropriate employment may be a better indicator. In a few locations agencies providing occupational education to CETA clients mandate that placement be an integral part of their training. In this situation, the CETA client signs a training agreement with placement being an important program component.

Ironically, most secondary and post-secondary LEA's already provide placement services to their in-school youths. While extending this service to CETA clients would present no immediate problem, unfortunately, the service is usually only made available to program graduates due to a shortage of placement officials. To be effective, placement services must be extended to program dropouts, summer employment, part-time employment, and after school employment. A comprehensive placement service would provide ongoing employment service that extends beyond initial employment.

Academic Credit For Work Experience: Providing academic credit for work experience is an ideal method to use in attracting CETA clients into traditionally structured LEA programs. The practice of awarding academic credit for work experience has traditionally been commonplace at both secondary and post-secondary levels. Academic credit has only been awarded, however, if the work experience has been "supervised." In spite of this practice, the varying philosophies of LEA officials make it difficult, if not impossible, to select one work experience program and use it as a model for all others.

There are certain legal ramifications associated with the work experience programs, especially at the secondary level. This is, in part, due to the state control over LEA programs and the awarding of a high school diploma. These constraints, however, should in no way interfere with LEA efforts to award academic credit to CETA clients for their previous work experience. Credit should be made available for elective courses as well.

A key in granting academic credit lies in the personality and commitment of the appropriate LEA officials. Once this is viewed as a viable option to any occupational education program, LEA administrators should negotiate a procedure whereby they are contracted to award appropriate academic credit. By implementing a system of "credit for experience" the options available to CETA clients, as well as in-school youth, are greatly increased. Not only could the client apply these credits to a high school diploma but attending a post-secondary institution also becomes a reality.

Instructor In-Service Activities: Another key to successfully adapting LEA programs to CETA clients lies in the instructor's receptiveness to having the clients in his/her class. It is widely recognized that academic credentials are not as important to instructor success as the ability to communicate and be

receptive. This is extremely important when considering the potential wide range of education, ethnic, social, and cultural backgrounds of the CETA client.

In many instances, LEA's will be using existing instructors for CETA oriented programs. This practice lowers the cost associated with hiring additional instructors and reduces LEA commitment to these individuals should the program fold due either to low enrollment or decreased funding. Because of this approach, existing instructors will have had experience only with in-school youth. This experience will have shaped not only their teaching strategies but also their classroom attitudes and behaviors. Unfortunately, the behaviors and attitudes acceptable to in-school youth (and reinforced by the classroom actions) may be inappropriate or even offensive to the CETA client. If this occurs, the client will see the instructor as a barrier to success; making learning difficult, if not impossible.

To ensure that "misunderstandings" are not negatively affecting program efforts, instructors participating in the CETA effort should receive some orientation concerning the characteristics of the CETA client. The focus of this orientation should be directed toward developing some understanding of

- (1) appropriate learning strategies for the CETA client,
- (2) effective teaching techniques for the CETA client,
- (3) cultural and ethnic background of the CETA client, and
- (4) potential areas of skill deficiencies.

Obviously, success is not determined totally by instructor orientation. To maintain that this is the case infers that the educational process is a one sided effort. It is also important that the clients understand the behaviors and attitudes of their instructors. To accomplish an understanding on the part of both the client and the instructor requires that free lines

of communication are open to both sides. It is important to remember that each party needs not accept the beliefs and values of the other, but only recognize their existence. Only after this occurs can a tension-free classroom exist.

Summary

It can be seen that LEA's at both the secondary and post-secondary levels can make a significant contribution to the occupational education of CETA clients. Some of the previous suggestions for adapting LEA programs to CETA clients may appear to be impossible at first glance. However, it should be recognized that sincere attempts on the part of CEA administrators can reduce these perceived obstacles.

The unique strengths of the LEA's make them a strong contender in providing occupational education for CETA agencies. With a few minor modifications of their existing programs, LEA's can make a significant contribution to the overall development of CETA/Educational linkages.

Points to Remember for Adapting LEA Programs
To CETA Clients

- (1) Develop goals, statements and objectives specific to the needs of CETA clients.
- (2) Develop and use curriculum and instructional strategies unique to the CETA client.
- (3) Develop and implement a career information center.
- (4) Provide job placement services to program graduates, program dropouts, and former program graduates.
- (5) Make job placement services available for full time employment, part time employment, and temporary employment.
- (6) Training should be short and direct.
- (7) Program content should be flexible to allow for individual differences.
- (8) Necessary support and/or remedial services should be an integral part of all programs and be provided free of charge.
- (9) Instructors should be selected on their ability to work with CETA type clients and not academic credentials.
- (10) Develop and conduct inservice activities for instructors of CETA clients to make them aware of the CETA client's background and characteristics.

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COUNSELING THE CETA CLIENT
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